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PRINCIPAL ACCESSIONS

IRISH CROSS.—Through the kindness of one of its Fellows, Mr. John D. Crimmins, the Museum has received a plaster cast of the famous Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice, in Ireland.

The cross bears an inscription in Celtic which translated reads, "A prayer for Muiredach by whom was made this cross." Dr. Petrie, in his work on the *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, expresses the opinion that "Muiredach, son of Domball, tanist, Abbot of Armagh, chief steward of the southern O'Neill, and successor of Buite, the son of Bronach, head of the council of all the men of Bregia," was "likely to have been the erector of the crosses of Monasterboice and their contemporaneous Round Tower." This opinion is founded on the circumstance of two Muiredachs being mentioned in the Annals of Ulster as having been abbots of Monasterboice, one having died in 844 A.D., the other in 923 or 924 A.D.

To the second of these Dr. Petrie ascribes the erection of the crosses and tower, "because," as he says, "he was a man of much greater distinction and probably wealth," than the other.

As Muiredach is not an unusual name in Ireland, there seems to be no reason for assuming that the crosses were erected by abbots of Monasterboice, and that the

same person erected all of the crosses and the Pillar Tower also.

The cross is described by Wakeman in his *Handbook of Irish Antiquities*, as the finest example of this class of Celtic sculpture now remaining. The shaft diminishes slightly in its ascent, and is divided upon its various sides by twisted bands into compartments, each of which contains either sculptured figures or tracery of very intricate design, or animals, probably symbolical.



CROSS OF MUIREDACH

The figures and other carvings on the cross are of great interest, the former as affording an excellent idea of the dress, both ecclesiastical and military, of the Irish during the ninth and early tenth centuries. The bottom panel of the front of the cross is one of two contemporary representations of persons wearing a penannular brooch. Many reproductions of these interesting brooches

are to be found in gallery 9.

The cast has been set up in the Hall of Casts on the first floor.

AN EARLY AMERICAN PASTEL DRAWING.—A pastel drawing made in the early part of the nineteenth century has been given to the Museum by Mrs. Caroline E. Lawrence Ingersoll. Mrs. Ingersoll, considering the historical importance of the portrait paramount, first offered the picture

to the Art Commission of the City of New York, but afterwards, acting on the recommendation of the Commissioners, and in consideration of its artistic merits, gave it to the Museum.

The drawing is a portrait of Josiah Ingersoll, who was Warden of the Port of New York in 1820 and Master Warden from 1833 to 1839. It is a pleasing example of the portraiture of the time, particularly charming in its color and precise drawing. The name of the artist has not yet been ascertained, but this should not prove impossible since there could not have been many artists at the time in New York (where we may presume it was done) capable of producing such a satisfactory work.

OXBOW, by Thomas Cole. —A large landscape by Thomas Cole, entitled "The Oxbow of the Connecticut, near Northampton," has been given to the Museum by Mrs. Russell Sage. The picture was purchased directly from Mr. Cole by the late Charles N. Talbot from whose estate it was bought by Mrs. Sage. The subject is a view of the famous Oxbow of the Connecticut River near Northampton and Mt. Holyoke as it existed at the time. The picture shows a thunderstorm sweeping toward a sunlit valley with winding river from the shape of whose course is derived the picture's name. A hill covered with undergrowth from which rise some bare trees occupies the foreground, where an artist sits painting and on the rock near him are a sketching umbrella, a camp stool, and a portfolio marked "T. Cole." The figure is Thomas Cole himself and marks the spot from which the picture was supposed to have been painted.

Not only for the excellence of the work, but also as being one of the most important productions in pure landscape of the

founder of American landscape-painting, this picture is a very desirable acquisition to the Museum collection. It shows what was best in Cole's art—his reverent admiration for nature, his sincerity and his love of romanticism.

Mr. Samuel Isham writes of this picture in *The History of American Painting*, as follows:

"His smaller pictures, both American and Italian, are his best; but his big canvases, like the 'Oxbow' with its winding river in a wide stretched plain filled full of minute details of trees and fences and houses, with its coming thunderstorm and its Salvator Rosa trees in the foreground, are original and impressive and had a great influence on his successors.

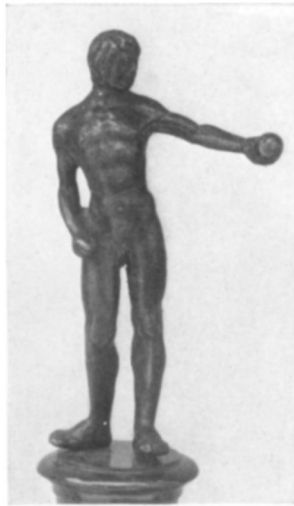


FIG. 1. ADAM
BRONZE STATUETTE,
VENICE OR PADUA
XV CENTURY

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE STATUETTES AND PLAQUES.

—The Italian Renaissance infused new life into all forms of art, including that of bronze casting, which had fallen almost entirely into abeyance since the classical period.¹ This reawakening was not only of a technical, but of an artistic nature, for the great artists of the Renaissance interested themselves in a form of art so peculiarly adapted to the enrichment of the palaces. Masters like Ghiberti, Brunelleschi, Donatello, and Michelangelo executed small bronzes side by side with their important works, and the art attained a measure of perfection which has scarcely since been equaled. Besides these men were artists who devoted themselves exclusively to the production of small bronzes, and who, compared to the great masters, lacked nothing in inventiveness and creative faculty. Men such as Bertoldo, Michelangelo's master; as Moderno, Riccio, Valerio Belli, and so on, the field of

¹ W. Bode, *The Italian Bronze Statuettes of the Renaissance*. London, 1907.

their labors being principally Florence and Padua.

In spite of a somewhat clumsy technique, the works of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, on account of their force and freedom, are still to be preferred to the academically correct productions of the seventeenth century, and they are rightly sought after by collectors, who in the last ten years have paid astonishing prices for such examples.

In the statuettes and plaques recently acquired by the Museum we can to some extent study the different conceptions of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, and of the different workshops—those of Florence and of the north of Italy. The figure of the youth holding an apple (fig. 1) is obviously of Paduan or Venetian origin, and stands in close relation to two statuettes, the one in the Hof Museum in Vienna and the other in the possession of the Contessa Bearn, which are considered by Dr. Bode to be possibly studies for the Adam by Antonio Rizzo in the Palace of the Doges in Venice. The identity of the subject gives weight to this supposition, since with the exception of these sculptures, Adam was a theme rarely employed in the Italian Renaissance, and really northern in character. The style, too, especially that of the Vienna figure, is closely related to ours. It is a mere

sketch, but this very lack of finish has served to preserve the freshness of the artist's conception.

Much more complicated in pose are two statuettes of Fathers of the Church (fig. 2), which in contrast to the relieflike conception of the Quattrocento figure express the sculpture in the round of the Cinquecento. The composition is based on a contraposition of the limbs, that is, one arm and the opposite foot being outstretched, while in the opposite figure the other arm and foot are brought into play. The result is a pose of the bodies which brings the two figures into a rhythmic relation to each other.

Michelangelo, especially, has familiarized us with this treatment, and the two statuettes are reminiscent of his work. According to Dr. Bode's surmise they may be attributed to Montorsoli, one of his pupils.

The somewhat flat modeling of the Quattrocento, destined to be viewed from one side only, qualified its artists peculiarly for work in relief. In fact, the most remarkable achievements of the Quattrocento are in this form or in sculptures planned to be seen from one aspect, as is demonstrated in the works of Donatello, and his pupils Jacopo della Quercia, the Robbias, and Michelangelo in his earlier works. It was natural, therefore,



FIG. 2. FATHERS OF THE CHURCH
BRONZE STATUETTES. SCHOOL OF MICHELANGELO

that the art of the medalist should be particularly developed during the fifteenth century.

The five plaques, newly acquired by the Museum, are all of North Italian origin and may be attributed to three artists: Moderno, Valerio Belli, and a pupil of Jacopo Sansovino. These first two artists belong by right of style to the Quattrocento, although both of them were still at work during the sixteenth century. The versatility of Moderno's art is well displayed in the three plaques, the Madonna with Donors, which has been used as a Pax; the Pietà (fig. 3), and the mythological scene of Cacus stealing the Oxen from Hercules. The force of his artistic expression and somewhat violent temperament are especially noticeable in the Pietà, a variation of a conception to be seen in Padua and Venice in the works of Mantegna, Crivelli, and Giovanni Bellini.

More tender in feeling and surer in execution are the figures by Valerio Belli, whose Pietà in its noble repose forms a striking contrast to Moderno's work. He affects a

level and symmetrical arrangement of the figures, and robes them in classical, flowing garments. This plaque, too, has been used as a Pax, the proportions of the framework being especially charming, and the four corners inlaid with niello work.

Like the statuettes previously mentioned, the medal of the Madonna Enthroned, Festival of the Rosary, presents to us vividly the art of the High Renaissance, although more in the picturesque Venetian style than in the severe Florentine feeling. Here, too, is a visible effort to attain a rhythmic arrangement of the figures, to place them in complicated postures and to obtain a higher, more plastic relief. The rich framework, the number of figures represented, the splendid garments, and finally, the representation of this Festival of the Rosary with the Doge in the background, a subject chosen by Dürer in his famous picture painted for Venice in 1506, give us a glimpse of the stately civilization of the Republic at the zenith of its power. W. V.



FIG. 3. PIETÀ
GILT BRONZE PLAQUE, BY MODERNO
XV CENTURY